

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2306**

March 28, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Secretary Shulkin,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as the next Administrator of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Ensuring the care and treatment of our nation's veterans is one of my highest priorities and I look forward to working with you and your team in the new Congress to further both of these goals.

I write to you today to express my concern regarding recent reports that veterans are being directed to a *disconnected* Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) number when seeking information about their benefits claims at the VA. Almost 470,000 veterans are currently stuck within the appeals process that can take as much as five years to complete. It is unacceptable that our veterans cannot even receive info on their appeal while they wait in the already exceedingly long appeals process. Therefore, I am requesting responses to the following questions regarding these reports and am interested in learning how my colleagues and I can work with you to address the situation:

1. In regards to the Board of Veterans' Appeals phone line, which as of noon today is still disconnected and listed on the official BVA website, what happened that caused the line to disconnect and why has the issue not been remedied yet? This phone number has reportedly been disconnected for over a week.
2. Is your Department aware of the issue and, if so, what steps are you taking to ensure that information regarding a veteran's appeal is readily available?
3. Do you and your Department have a plan in place to shorten the unacceptably long wait times our veterans experience while appealing their benefit claims decisions? If so, what steps are being taken and what can Congress do to assist the VA in improving timelines of the appeals process?

Congress and the VA have a responsibility to serve our veterans with the same dedication and distinction as they demonstrated while serving our country. Like you, I am committed to ensuring that our nation's heroes receive timely, top-quality care and to improving the way the VA carries out this important mission.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our nation's veterans. I look forward to working with you and to reviewing your response to my request. If you have any additional questions, please contact Nick Lunneborg at [Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov](mailto:Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov) or at (202) 329-3499.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress